

Thoughts for the Vassāna Season – 2002

The Vassāna Season of the year 2002 commences today on 24th of July. Venerable Dhammavihari Thera will be in residence at the Center during this entire period.

We intend to initiate among our membership, whom we believe we know reasonably well and with whom we work in close trust, a vibrant movement of Basic Buddhist Thinking which is urgently needed today to seriously upgrade the quality of our Buddhist religious life among the rank and file.

We are definitely called upon to reduce immediately the multifarious ritualistic religious activities, both of thinking and acting, which are springing up like mushrooms under the leadership of men and women, both monk and laymen, of diverse questionable grades of religious acceptability.

We have to call the attention of our Buddhists to many of the malpractices which we know are now being initiated in the city of Colombo in the name of Buddhism by many misguided persons, quite often from other parts of the world, who call themselves Enlightened Buddhists.

This alone will bring greater harmony among the Buddhists in the country and usher in a period of peace and prosperity among the Sri Lankans. These neo-movements, no matter of what origin, are seriously divisive in character.

Therefore I have arranged to hold, wherever possible, Dhamma Sessions of about 45 minutes duration, from 5.30 to 6.15 in the regular Poya Activities Hall, prior to the commencement of our Āloka Pūjā, on the New Moon days.



Supplement

In Buddhism the Noble Eightfold Path, i.e. the *Ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* is declared to be the one and only way for the attainment of the transcendental goal of Nirvana, which alone gets one beyond the ills of *samsāric* continuance. Therefore for the Buddhist, the importance of knowing it and knowing about it, clearly and without confusion and ambiguity, is vitally important.

Our study this week is therefore based on this. The way or *magga* is only a path. It leads the raw uninitiated worldling, Buddhist merely by birth or non-Buddhist who knows nothing about Buddhism, to have access to Buddhism and thereafter take him through the practice of the way to the desired goal of release from *samsāra*. But the way or *magga* itself does not contain the desired release of *vimutti* within it.

It only qualifies the pursuit of the way, after developing the preceding seven conditions of the way [*satta samādhi parikkhārā*] to acquire the invariable gathered-togetherness of mind or *samādhi* through which one acquires the indispensable instrument of perfected wisdom in *ñāṇa* or *paññā* as number nine [well beyond the way] with which one tears apart the bonds which tie the worldling to *samsāra*. Thus both wisdom as the means [as *ñāṇa* or *paññā*] and release or *vimutti* as the final product of spiritual aspirations lie clearly beyond the path.

What we have described so far is the religious disciplinary process through which a Buddhist disciple has to go from his initial conversion to the faith [by conviction and not by birth], in order to reach the final liberation for which he aspires. This journeying through religion includes several grades of spiritual elevation, both as products of the preceding and unmistakably superior to the former out of which it has arisen. This has to be clearly understood.

